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PM-GARRISON 10-15

NEW ORLEANS (UPI) -- FORMER DISTRICT ATTORNEY JIM GARRISON HAS AGREED TO DEFEND A MAN HE ONCE TRIED TO CONNECT TO THE ASSASSINATION OF JOHN F. KENNEDY.

GARRISON, WHO MADE INTERNATIONAL HEADLINES WITH HIS INVESTIGATION OF AN ALLEGED PLOT BEHIND THE ASSASSINATION OF THE LATE PRESIDENT, SAID HE WILL DEFEND ONE OF HIS MOST ARDENT CRITICS, GORDON NOVEL.

NOVEL AND ANOTHER MAN ARE ACCUSED OF CONSPIRING TO FIRE BOMB A FEDERATION OF CHURCHES BUILDING LAST MARDI GRAS.

NOVEL'S NAME CAME INTO PROMINENCE IN 1967 WHEN HE WAS QUOTED IN NEWSPAPERS AS SAYING HE WORKED FOR THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY.

GARRISON SOUGHT TO QUESTION HIM AS A MATERIAL WITNESS IN THE KENNEDY ASSASSINATION CASE, BUT NOVEL FLED TO OHIO WHERE AUTHORITIES REFUSED TO EXTRADITE HIM.

AT THE TIME, NOVEL CALLED GARRISON'S INVESTIGATION "AN ENORMOUS FRAUD" AND LATER FILED SUIT AGAINST GARRISON IN FEDERAL COURT ALLEGING NEARLY $50 MILLION DAMAGES. THE SUIT WAS DISMISSED WHEN NOVEL REFUSED TO RETURN TO LOUISIANA TO GIVE A DEPOSITION.

NOVEL ALSO FILED A $10 MILLION LIBEL SUIT AGAINST GARRISON AND PLAYBOY MAGAZINE, BUT A FEDERAL COURT IN CHICAGO DISMISSED THAT CASE ON THE GROUNDS NOVEL WAS A PUBLIC FIGURE.

GARRISON'S DECISION WEDNESDAY TO DEFEND NOVEL ON THE ARSON CONSPIRACY CHARGE CAME ONE DAY BEFORE THE CASE WAS SCHEDULED TO GO TO TRIAL. THE MOVE LED CRIMINAL DISTRICT JUDGE MATTHEW BRANIFF TO DELAY TRIAL UNTIL OCT. 27.

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